

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> June 2018

**Title:** Report Item 17 – Correspondence

**By:** K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

**Purpose:** To report on correspondence received since the May meeting

**Recommendations:** To note the report

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The following items of correspondence have been received since the May council meeting:

- **Maria Caulfield MP** – Ms Caulfield has held a follow up meeting with the Post Office, in which discussion with the post master was had in terms of the services that could be offered in East Dean. She states: ‘The Post Office are open to post offices taking on more services and there are a number of other branches taking on additional services. In terms of the supplies and service from Post Office limited to the East Dean and Friston branch, these should now be resolved and if there are any further problems please do let me know as I can take them up with the regional co-ordinator who is keen to ensure these are sorted out’.
- **Wealden District Council** – Electoral Services will be carrying out a review of all premises used as polling stations in the District. They will be looking at access and suitability for all electors, but in particular for those with specific requirements. Responses are requested by the end of June 2018.
- **Improper Use of East Dean Car Park** – a resident has asked the council for support in combating the improper use of the village car park by a Czech coach company which parked its vehicle in the entrance road, where it caused an obstruction for some hours whilst the passengers went on foot to Birling Gap. Wealden District council’s off-street Parking Order prohibits such activity, and WDC has been asked to advise on how best to deal with such situations. The National Trust at Birling Gap apparently do not allow coaches in their car park at the weekend. The resident is pursuing the matter with the Czech embassy.
- **Seafarers UK** – this organisation is lobbying parish councils to raise public awareness of the role of the merchant navy, by flying the Red Ensign on Merchant Navy Day (3<sup>rd</sup> September). In fact EDFPC has done this for a good many years, and the tradition continues. On hearing of this, Seafarers UK has invited the parish council to sign up on its website to be added to its Roll of Honour!
- **Wealden District Council** – has approved a new Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2023, based on the findings of the recent consultation.

- **Mrs J Tatum** – the installation of the new phone mast (East Dean 8054402) is needed for safety reasons at Birling Gap. Enquiries have produced the news that the permission for this mast lasts five years but that installation may be delayed indefinitely. The parish council is requested to lobby the Community Engagement Team at CTIL to implement the permission given for the installation. [A recent press release on the subject is attached.](#) It is argued that ‘the risk factor is critical, and to consider only costs is not only not right given the area, but damaging to the company’s reputation’. However, there is no universal agreement: residents whose properties are close to the site of the proposed mast do not want the matter chased up, and argue that the signal from this spot may not reach Birling Gap because of the height of the hills in between. ‘Also it will not make this area any safer as there is already a public telephone box at Birling Gap and other land lines’.
- **National Trust** – in answer to a query from a resident, the NT has confirmed that the parish pass scheme for parking at Birling Gap and Crowlink was phased out in 2015-16 due to low take-up. Residents of East Dean and Friston who are either National Trust members, staff or volunteers receive free parking at both Birling Gap and Crowlink. Parking is also free for blue badge holders. The NT can also ‘offer residents National Trust membership from £5.75 a month which will give them free parking and also contribute towards our conservation work in the South Downs’.
- **Wealden District council’s response to ESCC’s consultation on Household Waste recycling sites is appended to this report.**
- **The Drove** – [a number of residents have complained about the gate now barring the access to The Drove from the Went Way, and have queried whether this is permitted.](#) It is: the Gilbert Estate has been able to argue that the public access previously enjoyed over this track was not a right but a concession, which the landowner is entitled to withdraw.

31/05/2018

06/06/2018

## **Wealden District Council**

### **Response to ESCC Proposals for Household Waste Recycling Sites May 2018**

#### Introduction

Wealden District is predominantly rural covering 837 square kilometres with an increasing population, projected to be 184,651 by 2034. Residents are dedicated recyclers and the overall household recycling rate for Wealden has increased in recent years, counter to national trends. Whilst we recognise the financial pressures that the County Council is facing we are concerned by the proposed closure of the Forest Row and Wadhurst HWRS. Such a move would deprive Wealden residents of extensively used and appreciated local facilities and lead to potentially deleterious consequences. We would ask that alternatives are considered in more detail before final decisions are taken. The following comments provide more detail in support of this view.

#### Comments

We fully appreciate the need for East Sussex County Council to review the provision of Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRS) and to consider changes that they believe best meet the needs of residents in the most efficient and economical way. However, as the December 2017 review acknowledges, HWRSs have '...a significant role in enhancing ... recycling and waste management services...' Residents of Forest Row and Wadhurst were found to be '...most likely to use sites 1-4 times a week...' compared to the network average of 1-3 times a month. When similar proposals to close these two sites were made in 2013 '... a very strong response was received indicating how popular they are with residents...'. We do not believe that position has changed. Whilst the review states the performance of the two sites is considered to make them of lower importance to the HWRS network, they are not of lower importance to local residents.

We would also ask whether full consideration has been given, in line with Government advice, as to whether a voluntary or community body, charity, parish council or private business is interested in providing or helping to provide alternative solutions to run the service<sup>1</sup>. Operating a mobile site on a weekly basis, such as occurred at Uckfield prior to opening the Maresfield HWRS should also be considered. Although this would still mean a significant reduction in the service available to local residents it would provide an option for the disposal of waste without the need to travel greater distance.

The review makes reference to the possibility of providing facilities for chargeable trade waste. This could generate an income and remove, or at least reduce, the need to close Forest Row and Wadhurst HWRS. This does not seem to feature in the consultation and again we would ask for further assessment of this.

Notwithstanding the loss of amenity through site closure, two other factors cause concern. First, the potential for increased fly-tipping. We accept that there is little conclusive evidence to directly link closure of HWRS to an increase in fly-tipping. However, we would argue that the evidence is, at best, mixed. As a rural District the natural beauty of Wealden is often blighted by the illegal dumping of waste. The majority of such events occur in quiet rural lanes and we recognise that many of these events currently occur regardless of the provision of HWRS. Nonetheless, we are very concerned that if the closure of Forest Row and Wadhurst HWRS together with introduction of charging for certain types of waste were to proceed the likelihood of illegal dumping will increase significantly - the option to dispose of waste legally will be made more difficult and costly and with increased journey times to the next available HWRS.

We would also point out that a number of existing fly-tip incidents comprise of the materials identified for charging and would be concerned that such cases will increase if charges are introduced. Any increase in fly-tipping will have a detrimental effect both on the environment, particularly the Ashdown Forest as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and on the quality of life for local residents. We welcome the commitment to monitor fly-tip data and work with districts and boroughs should changes to HWRS be made and would ask that, should an increase occur, appropriate resources are provided to deal with the additional work and costs created in clearing fly-tips.

Secondly, we note the need for an assessment of whether vehicle trips across the Ashdown Forest are likely to increase as a result of HWRS closure. We welcome the commitment to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening and would ask that this is used to inform the final decision.

We would also point out that the impact assessment on resident's journey times to a HWRS is largely predicated on Wealden residents that would use Forest Row and Wadhurst sites being able to use sites in East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells. There is no indication from the documentation provided as to whether either West Sussex or Kent County Council have been consulted and are agreeable to such cross-border movement of waste - which would increase use of their sites and therefore their operating costs. Without the presumed use of these sites journey times will be increased significantly and in some locations predicted journey times would jump from 7.5 minutes to 25 minutes.

### Conclusion

We recognise that difficult decisions need to be taken in light of the financial pressures facing the County Council and other local authorities across East Sussex. However, we remain deeply concerned about the proposals and feel that there are alternatives to the proposed closure of Wadhurst and Forest Row HWRS that merit further consideration before final decisions are made.

Finally, we welcome the proposed improvements to Hailsham HWRS and fully support the intention to alter opening hours across the network to better meet demand.